

LAW ENFORCEMENT NEWS

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

Courtroom Updates

NITRO nears one-year birthday

The Northwest Missouri Interagency Team Response Operation is nearing its one-year anniversary. Since the NITRO Task Force was created last year, it has initiated 104 investigations involving firearms violations, explosives violations, narcotics trafficking and meth production. Of those 104 investigations, NITRO has already recommended 77 individuals for prosecution in the federal and state court systems. Of the 77 individuals recommended for prosecution, NITRO has documented a total of 97 violations and already convicted 18 defendants. NITRO is composed of a 19-county region in Northwest Missouri and involves federal, state and local agencies.

State honors officer killed in '85 by dedicating highway to him

The State of Missouri recently dedicated a portion of U.S. 65 Highway to a state Trooper who was killed in the line of duty in 1985. The stretch of highway was named Trooper Jimmie E. Linegar Memorial Highway at a meeting at the Missouri Department of Transportation offices in Branson, Mo. The new name for the stretch of highway was officially approved by the state on July 11, 2003.

Two Assistant U.S. Attorneys, paralegal recognized by KCPD

Paul S. Becker, Assistant U.S. Attorney and Chief of the office's Organized Crime Strike Force, Bruce E. Clark, Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Organized Crime Strike Force, and Sharon Hutsler, Strike Force Unit paralegal, was recently recognized by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department for their work on a case involving more than 30 robberies in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Each of the representatives of the United States Attorney's Office were presented a certificate of appreciation by Kansas City Police Chief Richard Easley in August.

St. Joseph woman's Sept. 11 fraud ends in sentence, order of restitution

Cassaundra Montgomery receives 21-month sentence, must pay \$63,817

A St. Joseph woman pleaded guilty and was sentenced in federal court in September for defrauding several disaster relief organizations working to assist victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York.

Cassaundra Estelle Montgomery, 42, of St. Joseph, was sentenced to 21 months in federal prison without parole after pleading guilty before U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey to four counts of mail fraud. U.S. Attorney Todd P. Graves noted that this was the harshest sentence available under the federal sentencing guidelines. The court also ordered Montgomery to pay a total of \$63,817 in restitution to the American Red Cross Liberty Fund (\$38,817), Safe Horizons' September 11 Fund (\$20,000), and the Robin Hood Relief Fund (\$5,000).

By pleading guilty, Graves said, Montgomery admitted that she used the mails to perpetrate a scheme to defraud charitable organizations providing financial assistance to victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"Thousands of people lost their lives on September 11, 2001, when two planes hijacked by terrorists crashed into the World Trade Center towers in New York," Graves said. "Tens of thousands more suffered severe physical, emotional and economic losses. As the rest of the nation mourned the devastating loss and as Americans rallied together to support those victims, Montgomery was plotting and scheming to illegally enrich herself. Her conduct not only desecrates the memory of the true victims of 9-11, but deprived others of needed assistance."

Montgomery called the New York Police Department on Sept. 25, 2001, Graves said, and filed a false missing person report for a brother, Jeffrey David Montgomery, who did not exist. Montgomery claimed that her brother had gone into the World Trade Center on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, to apply for a job at Cantor Fitzgerald, and was killed during the terrorist attacks. After filing that missing person report, contacting various charitable organizations, and submitting false documentation to them as proof of her brother's existence and death, Montgomery received \$63,817 between Oct. 23, 2001, and Dec. 26, 2001.

Montgomery falsely claimed that she was financially dependent on her brother, Graves said. Montgomery received money from the charitable organizations to pay her personal expenses, he added, including rent, utility bills, credit card bills, medical expenses, a leased Cruiser automobile, and other bills and expenses.

Each of the four counts to which Montgomery pleaded guilty charges a separate of mail fraud, in which Montgomery caused checks made payable to herself to be issued by the charitable organizations and mailed to her St. Joseph address. Although not part of the charges to which Montgomery formally pleaded guilty, additional charges contained in the original 10-count indictment were considered by the court as relevant conduct for the purposes of sentencing and restitution.

As part of the scheme to defraud and to prove her brother's existence, Graves explained, Montgomery sent the American Red Cross a false Missouri Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate for Jeffrey D. Montgomery, bearing a fictitious Social Security account number, along with other documents.

To show her financial dependence on her brother, Graves said, Montgomery also created and sent the American Red Cross a false rental contract for an apartment that she purportedly shared with her brother. Montgomery also created fictitious mail addressed to him at the apartment. Finally, Montgomery sent the American Red Cross a signed affidavit for issuance of a death certificate for her nonexistent brother.

